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Summary of positions expressed, with respect to semester vs. quarter system, of chief agricultural administrators in 10 midwestern institutions similar in size and influence to University of Minnesota. Status quo defended in most institutions, but with institutions operating under each plan tending to move toward the other. Listing of factors favorable to each system.

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Preliminary Report
Attitudes of Deans of Agriculture in the North Central Area With Respect to the Semester vs. Quarter System

To obtain the attitudes and a comment on the experiences of certain other Land-Grant institutions with respect to the semester versus quarter system a letter of inquiry was directed to the Deans of Agriculture of ten neighboring institutions. The area of agriculture was chosen as a point of departure because of the feeling that certain factors other than those of a strictly academic nature would influence attitudes of staffs in Agriculture with respect to this problem. These factors include the effect of seasonal variations on the teaching program, the joint research-teaching function of a large proportion of the faculty in Agriculture, and the responsibilities to the home farm program faced by many students in Agriculture. Midwestern institutions of somewhat comparable size and influence were chosen as targets for inquiry. Of these ten institutions, six were on the semester system, and four operated on the quarter basis.

In a majority of instances their replies indicated a major satisfaction with the method of operation extant on the individual campuses. A majority of the supporting arguments for either position are to be found in the list originally submitted to this committee. A brief summary of the position expressed by the chief administrator of the College or Division of Agriculture in each of the schools contacted is offered below. Only principal arguments for either position are listed, and a general summary of the attitude of the administration, insofar as it was revealed by his communication, is included.

Institutions Now Operating on the Semester System

University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Dean H. P. Rusk

In a college faculty polling (post-war), the agricultural faculty voted 72 to 7 in favor of the quarter system. They were outvoted by other faculties. Their rather strong inclination was toward a quarter system including principally 3, 4, and 5 credit courses, with few, if any, one and two hour subjects. Flexibility in scheduling, opportunities for acceleration, opposition to a vacation interruption, freeing the spring quarter for farm work, and better distribution of time for teaching and research were principal arguments favoring a quarter system.

Increased costs of registration under the quarter system and excess time spent in examination periods were principal arguments presented favoring the semester system.

Dean Rusk writes, "The matter has been brought up twice in the past ten years for vote at the University of Illinois. Each time the College of Agriculture voted almost unaminously for the quarter system, but we were outvoted by the other colleges."

Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas. C. W. Mullen, Ass't Dean, School of Agric.

There is very little support for the quarter system at Kansas State. Mechanics of registration favor the semester program. The semester system has eliminated short independent courses and improved problem courses. Semester system is useful in assisting students to reorient themselves; a more meaningful teaching and examination procedure is made possible. No real reasons for support of quarter system apparent to Dean Mullen.

University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. J. H. Longwell, Director

General agreement is expressed with supporting arguments for both systems. Dean Longwell writes, ". . . I would be very much inclined to vote for the status quo of any institution which has already established its plan, whether a semester or quarter system. The change from one system to the other would undoubtedly involve a good many unforeseen difficulties that would take a long time to iron out, and I doubt that any particular advantage resulting from the change would outweigh the recognized disadvantages plus the unforeseen difficulties that would develop."

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University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska. W. V. Lambert, Dean.

Nebraska explored the question of change over to the quarter system after the Korean War outbreak, but because of problems involved in change-over decided to retain the semester system. With respect to arguments pro and con, Dean Lambert feels many of the questions can be worked out as well under one system as the other. He writes, "All in all, it is my considered judgment that there isn't a great deal to be gained in switching from one system to another. While my personal preference is for the quarter system, I do not think the advantages to be gained from this system would merit the time and effort on the part of the staff to make this change!"

Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana. V. C. Freeman, Associate Dean.

Possible change-over to quarter system has been studied at least twice at Purdue, with decision to remain on semester basis reached in each instance. The greater emphasis on time spent with student in classroom rather than in registration plus some advantages in examination procedure are among factors favoring the semester system. Dean Freeman concludes, "Although I have stated only the affirmative side for the semester program, it has always seemed to me that the matter comes down to the question of staff attitudes, administrative attitudes, and the pattern of experience for the university concerned. It seems questionable to me that either plan has advantages so completely over the other that there would be any sufficient reason for altering a plan already carefully worked out and understood by the staff and the students."

University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. R. K. Froker, Dean and Director

The question was discussed at Wisconsin, and decision to remain on the semester system made. Dean Froker believes the semester system provides for a little more efficient use of professorial and civil service staff. He believes graduate students in particular profit by the semester plan, with its less frequent interruptions.

Institutions Now Operating on the Quarter System

Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. L. M. Thompson, Director, Farm Operations Curriculum; Chairman of Special Committee to Consider Semester vs. Quarter Plan.

The quarter system favors those involved in combination research and teaching functions. While the staff feels that the semester plan is more effective in attaining educational objectives, the responsibilities of the staff in teaching, research, and public service lead them to support the quarter system. Thompson favors a move to the semester program, but feels the staff would not support such a move.

Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan. E. L. Anthony, Dean.

Dean Anthony cites this as a perrennial question in most institutions. He favors the quarter plan because of its usefulness with respect to the research, teaching function, allows repetition of course offerings more frequently, and lends itself to the seasonal factors affecting agriculture. His personal preference is very strongly worded in favor of the quarter system.

North Dakota Agricultural College, Fargo, North Dakota. H. L. Walster, Dean
School of Agriculture

Dean Walster criticizes the tendency under the quarter system teaching to endlessly subdivide subject matter into one, two, and three hour courses, rather than

the five credit arrangement. He concludes, "Both systems have their faults. I think that how they are interpreted and handled and how successfully the several courses are taught are matters of much greater concern than the mechanics of the term arrangement."

South Dakota State College, Brookings, South Dakota. A. M. Eberle, Dean, Division of Agriculture.

Dean Eberle reports that a recent inquiry addressed to vocational agriculture instructors and county extension agents (the source of many students in Agriculture) supports the quarter system plan of operation. He interprets the attitude of his staff as being that the quarter system more effectively serves the young people of the state, but does not elaborate.

General Summary

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this correspondence. Certainly there are reasonable arguments both in support of and against each system. Generally speaking the "status quo" is defended with some question raised by proponents of both plans as to the ultimate gains to be secured through changing from one plan to another. Tendencies are apparent in institutions operating under both the quarter and the semester basis to move toward the plan other than the one held.

More basic criticisms are directed at the increasing "splintering" of courses, or the breaking of course work down into small credit hour segments. A reversal of this trend, under either system, appears desirable.

(The above is Appendix A)

APPENDIX B
(Prepared by Dean Buchta)

Factors Favorable to the Semester System

1. Less time is spent in registration procedures, arranging room schedules, organizing classes, reporting final grades, and the usual bookkeeping procedures in connection with academic work. Time of students and staff is saved for academic work.

2. More time is available for reflective thinking and integration in a semester course than in a quarter course. Better term papers could be expected. The examinations could be more comprehensive. More collateral reading would likely be done under the semester plan. For the able, serious student, the semester as an instructional unit seems to be preferable.

3. The number of short independent courses would probably be reduced. The advisability of this change may be debated.

4. The Christmas and spring vacations afford opportunity for reading and study if a student has been ill or for some reason has not been able to do the quality and quantity of work of which he is capable.

5. The advising of students may be more effective. Under the semester system the student without special problems would probably see an adviser twice a year but may spend more time with him on these occasions than when the student registers three times per year. Actually the student now may be required to register so early in a quarter that the adviser and student have little evidence from the class work then in progress to guide them in registration for the next term.

6. Few course sequences would be marked with (+), that is, designated as courses for which no credit is given unless the sequence (two or three quarters) is completed.

7. The semester system allows a more effective time unit less than one year for leaves of absence for research or travel. The semester system, requiring less time for bookkeeping and clerical work, permits a corresponding increase of time for research and normal academic pursuits.

8. The semester time schedule coincides with that of the high schools (and with the majority of the universities and colleges).

9. If course sequences are initiated every quarter in order to gain for the student one of the advantages of the quarter system, a larger teaching load is placed on the faculty, at least a larger number of courses are operating simultaneously.

10. The semester plan would be an advantage to those students who have no particular problems in selecting a curriculum and who make normal progress in it. Those departments offering courses of two or three quarters' duration would have relatively little difficulty in changing to the semester system.

Factors Favorable to the Quarter System

1. Students' programs may be adjusted more readily. A student failing a course or finding himself in a curriculum not satisfactory to him may change his program with less loss of time.

2. A student during his four years in college may take a larger number of short, independent courses.

3. A department may offer a wider variety of short, independent courses. If the material in these courses is unchanged and presented under the semester plan, a number of two credit hour courses would be listed. The longer, less intensive course (two credit hours) is considered by many to be less desirable than the shorter, more intensive (three credit hours) course.

4. The quarter system permits holidays (Christmas and spring) at the end of an examination period.

5. It is claimed by some that students apply themselves better under the quarter system than under the semester system. It is stated that in some courses little concentrated study is done except just previous to examinations which may be more numerous under the quarter system than under the semester plan.

6. Fees payable at one time are less.

7. Students who can attend only a part of the academic year may drop out or reenter more readily. Some students of agriculture may attend fall or winter quarter but not spring and still earn a degree in six years. A longer time would be required if attendance were limited to one semester.

8. The quarter system offers more frequent graduation dates, thereby permitting some students to graduate a month or two earlier.

9. If a twelve-month school year is adopted, the summer term can be made the same length as other quarters of the year. If the normal school year remains as at present, one summer term of eight or nine weeks with double the number of class periods would permit the completion of semester courses for those who wish to attend summer sessions.

10. The students who switch from one curriculum to another and those students who do not make normal progress in their work will find the quarter system an advantage. The department or division having many isolated quarter courses would find a general revision of this curriculae necessary in changing to the semester system.

Appendix C

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